

the 18th. Brumaire he was possessed of 60,000,000, without owing a franc to any person.

This celebrated financier has been the object of great public attention.<sup>1</sup> The prodigious variations of fortune which he has experienced, the activity of his life, the immense commercial operations in which he has been engaged, the extent and the boldness of his enterprises, render it necessary, in forming a judgment of M. Ouvrard, to examine his conduct with due care and deliberation. The son of a stationer, who was able merely through his own resources to play so remarkable a part, could be no ordinary man. It may be said of M. Ouvrard what Beaumarchais said of himself, that his life was really a combat. I have known him long, and I saw much of him in his relations with Josephine. He always appeared to me to possess great knowledge of the world, accompanied by honorable principles, and a high degree of generosity, which added greatly to the value of his prudence and discretion. No human power, no consideration, not even the ingratitude of those whom he had obliged, could induce him to disclose any sacrifice which he had made at the time when, under the Directory, the public revenue may be said to have been always at the disposal of the highest bidder, and when no business could be brought to a conclusion except by him who set about it with his hands full of money. To this security, with which M. Ouvrard impressed all official persons

<sup>1</sup> Bourrienne goes at great length into the curious but well-known Ouvrard affair of which he could not have had much special knowledge at the time. The company of "Negociants réunis," composed of Ouvrard, Des-prez, and Wanlerberghe, had undertaken enormous contracts for the French and Spanish Governments. The French Treasury became mixed up with their affairs, and the large advances which had to be made to the company shook the public credit. This matter hung like a cloud over Napoleon during the Austerlitz campaign: see his Correspondence with Joseph in 1805, tome i. On the return of the Emperor, after the peace of Presburg, he dismissed M. Barbe Marbois, the Ministre du Tresor, but only for injudicious conduct, paying a compliment to his personal character at the time. The main wrath of the Emperor, who rightly or wrongly looked on himself as robbed, fell on Ouvrard, who was imprisoned for some years, and the fortune of himself and his associates appropriated to refunding the deficiency of the Treasury. Ouvrard afterwards pursued the same extraordinary and varied career: sometimes rich, and sometimes ruined. In 1823 he undertook the supply of the French army in Spain, and in 1830 was mixed up with the Spanish pretenders. He died in 1847. See the account of this affair by Thiers, tome vi. livres xxii. and xxiii.